
Declaration on Population: The World Leaders Statement

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Source: *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol. 1, No. 26 (Jan., 1968), pp. 1-3

Published by: [Population Council](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1965194>

Accessed: 16/12/2014 23:51

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Studies in Family Planning

A PUBLICATION OF
THE
POPULATION
COUNCIL

Number Twenty-Six

January, 1968

DECLARATION ON POPULATION: The World Leaders Statement

IN Number Sixteen of this bulletin, January 1967, we published a Declaration on Population signed by the heads of state of twelve countries and presented to Secretary-General U Thant of the United Nations on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1966.

During the past year, due to the continued efforts of Mr. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Population Council, the Declaration was signed by eighteen additional heads of state. In a ceremony held at the United Nations on December 11, 1967, the Secretary-General acknowledged the new signatories, the Colombian Ambassador to the United Nations spoke on behalf of the first group of signers, and the British Ambassador to the United Nations responded for the new group.

On this historic occasion, we are pleased to present here the statements of the Secretary-General, Dr. Turbay Ayala, and Lord Caradon, following the names of the entire group of thirty signatories—the twelve original and the additional eighteen heads of state. The statement itself appeared on the first page of issue Number Sixteen.

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HAROLD HOLT, *Prime Minister of Australia*
ERROL W. BARROW, *Prime Minister of Barbados*
DR. CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO, *President of Colombia*
JENS OTTO KRAG, *Prime Minister of Denmark*
DR. JOAQUIN BALAGUER, *President of Dominican Republic*
DR. D. URHO KKKONEN, *President of Finland*
LT. GEN. J. A. ANKRAH, *Chairman of the National Liberation Council of Ghana*
MME. INDIRA GANDHI, *Prime Minister of India*
GENERAL SUHARTO, *Acting President of Indonesia*
SHAH MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI, *Emperor of Iran*
EISAKO SATO, *Prime Minister of Japan*
HIS MAJESTY HUSSEIN, *King of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*
GENERAL CHUNG HEE PARK, *President of Republic of Korea*
TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN, *Prime Minister of Malaysia*
HIS MAJESTY HASSAN II, *King of Morocco*

HIS MAJESTY MAHENDRA, *King of Nepal*
DR. J. ZIJLSTRA, *Prime Minister of The Netherlands*
KEITH HOLYOAKE, *Prime Minister of New Zealand*
PER BORTEN, *Prime Minister of Norway*
FIELD MARSHAL MOHAMMED AYUB KHAN, *President of Pakistan*
FERDINAND E. MARCOS, *President of Republic of the Philippines*
LEE KWAN YEW, *Prime Minister of Singapore*
TAGE ERLANDER, *Prime Minister of Sweden*
THANOM KITTIKACHORN, *Prime Minister of Thailand*
ERIC WILLIAMS, *Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago*
HABIB BOURGUIBA, *President of Tunisia*
GAMAL ABDEL NASSER, *President of UAR*
HAROLD WILSON, *Prime Minister of United Kingdom*
LYNDON B. JOHNSON, *President of United States of America*
MARSHAL JOSIP BROZ-TITO, *President of Yugoslavia*

STATEMENT BY
SECRETARY-GENERAL U THANT
AT PRESENTATION OF
DECLARATION ON POPULATION
GROWTH

I am very pleased to receive this Declaration on population growth and human dignity and welfare. I want to express my particular appreciation to Mr. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Chairman of the Board both of the Population Council and of the Rockefeller Foundation, for his untiring efforts to secure ever wider acceptance of the Declaration. This document has now been signed by thirty Heads of State or Government.

There are important links between population growth and the implementation of the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is therefore wholly appropriate that the date chosen for this ceremony should follow so closely Human Rights Day.

It is also appropriate because, nowadays, population planning is seen not only as an integral part of national efforts for economic and social development but also as a way to human progress in modern society.

We observe today rapidly changing attitudes towards the population problem, particularly in the developing countries where the rates of population increase are usually so high. There now exists in many countries an express desire to limit the size of families, as illustrated by the fact that highly dangerous and illegal means are increasingly used for this purpose. The desire to limit the size of the family is not surprising. With an ever higher percentage of newborn children assured of healthy and productive lives, parents do not, as in the past, see the need for a very large family to be assured of good care in their old age.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society. It follows that any choice and decision with regard to the size of the family must irrevocably rest with the family itself, and cannot be made by anyone else. But this right of parents to free choice will remain illusory unless they are aware of the alternatives open to them. Hence, the right of every family to information and to the availability of services in this field is increasingly considered as a basic

human right and as an indispensable ingredient of human dignity.

The work of the United Nations itself in the population field has so far been relatively limited, given the importance of the problem. Against this background, I invited, in July of this year, Governments, non-governmental organizations and private individuals to contribute to a new trust fund for population activities. I renew this invitation today. Our aim is to expand our work in those countries where it is more needed and which request our help.

We are concerned with the number of human beings on earth. We bear an immense responsibility for the quality of human life in future generations. I have no doubt that we can succeed. Man has shown increasing ability to master his environment. He is now acquiring the knowledge, as well as the means, to master himself and his own future. It is his duty to do so—for his own sake and for the sake of succeeding generations to whom we must bequeath a life worthy of human beings.

* * *

REMARKS OF THE COLOMBIAN
AMBASSADOR, DR. JULIO CESAR
TURBAY AYALA, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE
PRESENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON POPULATION

Mr. Secretary General, Your Excellencies:

The ceremony which we are holding today as part of the observance of Human Rights Day, has a real significance and is intended to further the interest of international opinion in a problem which, despite its magnitude, has not yet been sufficiently studied by the statesmen of all nations.

The present generation must concern itself not only with current problems but also with eliminating those of future generations. We would be shirking our historic responsibilities if we did not look forward with the intention of providing, for our children and their descendants, a way of life compatible with the dignity of man.

This situation requires us to focus our attention on one of the most vital problems of mankind. It is what has been rightly called "the sickness of our time," namely, the population explosion. This

is a multi-disciplinary subject that embraces many fields and must be examined in the context of all its implications. In order to avoid tragic and dangerous errors, we must, when speaking of a population policy, think immediately of its involvement with social, economic, cultural, ethical and scientific questions.

Fortunately, the Secretary General of the United Nations has obtained the increasing support of many governments for the Declaration on the world's population problem. The original group of signatories to that very important document numbered twelve, and today we have the pleasure of sharing with eighteen additional Heads of State the concern arising from consideration of this matter.

The Declaration to which I refer holds that a true and lasting peace will depend in large measure on how we face the challenge of population growth. Of this there can be no doubt. The courageous way in which this problem has been faced by those few and eminent leaders who have studied it, and the inadequacy of statistical data on excessive population growth in the last decades, are beginning to alert many organizations and many governments to the perils of "the sickness of our time."

Whenever the possible moral repercussions of family planning upon society are considered in depth, one must think also of those moral iniquities which undeniably originate in the intolerable overcrowding suffered by the residents of communities afflicted by exploding populations. There is no need to seek out uncivilized corners of the earth to witness this dreadful spectacle of social decay; one need only glance at the bands of misery encircling many of our great cities.

Referring to those who consider the population problem primarily from its moral aspect, the President of Colombia has said: "What can they say to us of the promiscuity, the prevalence of incest, the primitive nature of sex education, the children sold into white slavery because of poverty, the child prostitution that exists among both sexes, the frequency of abortion, the almost animal-like mating in the mindlessness of alcoholic excess?" And he added, "I cannot stop to consider the morality or immorality of contraceptive practices without thinking at the same time of the immoral, often criminal, circumstances of the act of

human conception and of the situations it creates and perpetuates.”

In my country, this question of over-population has been the subject of study not only by the government and various professional and academic groups, but, with careful attention and indisputably good judgment, by the Catholic Church as well. It is President Lleras who, in his Message to Congress, cites some very important points from a declaration by the Colombian Episcopate which, recognizing that youth must be given wise and constructive sex education, adds that in due time, this “may include information about those methods discovered by science to aid married couples in determining the number of their children, methods which have been proved safe and have been shown to be consistent with the moral order. To place such methods within the reach of those who need them and cannot afford them is an additional task of society.” It is evident that the Church in Colombia has taken a progressive and responsible position.

It is hardly possible that at the present time there are still people who persist in ignoring a problem as crucial as the population explosion. Fortunately, the United Nations and many national and international groups are carrying on the missionary task of enlightening peoples and their governments to the many dangers that threaten the very existence of mankind through its own uncontrolled reproduction.

To formulate a population policy is now the imperative duty of every statesman. We must replace the outdated premise that to govern is to populate with one which holds that to govern is to plan the family and control overpopulation.

* * *

SPEECH BY LORD CARADON
IN THE UNITED NATIONS
AT THE FORMAL
PRESENTATION TO THE
UNITED NATIONS OF A
WORLD LEADERS’
DECLARATION ON POPULATION

A year ago the Secretary-General announced and endorsed the Population Declaration then made by twelve Heads

of States, and I have been asked to read the conclusions in that Declaration:

“As Heads of Governments actively concerned with the population problem, we share these convictions:—

“*We believe* that the population problem must be recognised as a principal element in long-range national planning if governments are to achieve their economic goals and fulfill the aspirations of their people.

“*We believe* that the great majority of parents desire to have the knowledge and the means to plan their families; that the opportunity to decide the number and spacing of children is a basic human right.

“*We believe* that lasting and meaningful peace will depend to a considerable measure upon how the challenge of population growth is met.

“*We believe* the objective of family planning is the enrichment of human life, not its restriction; that family planning, by assuring greater opportunity to each person, frees man to attain his individual dignity and reach his full potential.

“Recognising that family planning is in the vital interest of both the nation and the family, we, the undersigned, earnestly hope that leaders around the world will share our views and join with us in this great challenge for the well-being and happiness of people everywhere.”

That Declaration will be increasingly recognised, so I am sure, as a decisive document in history. Those who signed it, represented here today by the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia, have earned the gratitude and the admiration of us all. Their foresight and their courageous initiative have given us all a lead in what is now a world-wide campaign. It is a campaign of immense consequence in terms of human freedom and human dignity and human happiness.

We follow that lead today by adding the names of eighteen more Heads of States to the Declaration, and, as we do so, we pay tribute to the leadership of those who showed us the way on Human Rights Day last year.

I have the honour to speak for the eighteen nations whose Heads of State have now added their support to the

Declaration, and you, Sir, have given us the names of the countries which now support this Declaration—Australia, Barbados, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Jordan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States.

So now altogether thirty Heads of States have signed the Declaration. They speak for more than a third of the population of the whole world.

While we rejoice in this advance we should think today of how much has to be done to make up for lost time.

We try to understand the meaning of statistics of world population growth—statistics which measure misery in millions. But what we now hear in terms of terrifying statistics has long been known in terms of human suffering and human degradation.

The price of past blindness and complacency has been paid by those least able to understand and least able to protest, by the poor and by the illiterate—and specially by bewildered women and unwanted and neglected children.

Now there is a growing realisation, I am sure, that we can deal with the vast world problems of poverty and hunger and ignorance and disease—and hatred and fear and violence too—only if we deal at the same time with the problem of population. If we avoid or neglect the problem of population any longer we shall utterly fail in everything else.

It is therefore with a sense of eagerness and urgency that we embark on Human Rights Year. For it is under the banner of human rights that we rally to a new campaign—a campaign to prevent human waste, the utterly unforgiveable waste of the most precious thing in the world, the potentiality of the human personality. We are concerned today with no less than the future of all the peoples of the world. The international community has a special part to play in this campaign, and we who work in the United Nations have a special responsibility.

So it is with a due sense of the importance of this historic occasion and a due sense of our international obligation that I now formally present the Declaration recording the signatures of the eighteen Heads of States.